The Goggles and the Turtle

This story is set immediately after Magical Girl Raising Project: Limited

A Magical Girl's body is robust, while a Mage's physical strength and healing power is the same as a human's. However, Mages can cast magic to heal and cure their injuries. So, normally, Mages don't need to go to a hospital.

Does that mean Mages don't need hospitals at all?

Well, no. There are times when a Mage would prefer to use a hospital instead of using magic spells. If a Mage actually wanted to cure the common cold with a magic spell, they'd need to buy a chicken, cut off its head, and cast a spell using it.

Much easier to go to a hospital.

Also, there are other reasons to go to a hospital. Poisons and Magical effects need to be cured via a specialized hospital. You can never be too careful with magic. Thus, a hospital is still needed for Mages.

After the B-City incident, Mana was taken to the hospital immediately. The recoil of overdosing with Healing Medicine had a huge effect on her body.

Humans were never meant to have a Magical Girl's capabilities, and after sustaining her body, it popped like a bubble, unable to take the enormous energy it's exertion.

7753 hugged Mana as soon as she woke up from her huge battle. She was mentally and physically exhausted, unable to think of anything else but Mana.

Her goggles had a message appearing on them,

Get Mana to a hospital, fast! She's dying.

But 7753 couldn't move her body. She was too busy crying at the thought of not being able to see Mana again.

Even when the ambulances finally arrived, 7753 couldn't move. They took Mana to the hospital, and helped 7753 and Tepsekemei get resettled away.

In contrast, her (new) roommate, Tepsekemei, didn't cry. Although she couldn't express any emotions, she was still extremely sad. 7753 knew this through the use of her goggles, which she can use to tell Mei's current mood and feelings.

After the incident, Tepsekemei began trying to learn as much as she could. She read picture books and children's literature, learning the alphabet and understanding how languages worked.

Eventually, she began to understand words and sentences and how to properly form them, and can read basic sentences, as well.

The town was in ruins. There were so many civilian deaths, so many lives ruined. It's hard to believe that this was actually the *best* outcome. If they hadn't stopped Pukin and Rain Pou, even more would've been destroyed.

7753 had a conversation with her mentor.

"What did they do about the killswitch plan?"

They denied it as a rumor

"What? Just a rumor? But they were going to use it."

I know. But with the way things went, if they had confirmed those rumors, it would've made the Foreign Affairs Division look horrible.

"That makes sense…"

7753. I know you decided to stay when I asked you to save yourself.

"…I"

Relax. I'm not blaming you. You're not going to be punished. You did what you had to do, and the city was saved as a result. You've done all you can. Go get some rest. You deserve it.

7753 thought back on those words. '*you've done all you can*.'

It wasn't enough.

Wedin is dead.

Kuru-Kuru Hime is dead.

Funny Trick is dead.

Countless of the students had died, countless more innocents had died. Her best wasn't enough. She couldn't save everyone.

The unsung heroes, the Namiyama Magical Girls. Brought into this situation with no clue of the Land of Magic, no clue of the inner politics, no notion of anything beyond the barrier.

Yet they did better than anyone could've asked for.

When 7753 scanned their powers with her goggles, she didn't just scan their full potential as Magical Girls.

She saw through everything they knew.

She saw all their experiences, all that mattered to them. Their hopes, their joys, their fears. Their reasons for fighting, their willingness.

Her goggles gave her factual information, and as a result, she could see everything they thought about as they decided to help in the final battle.

But what hurt her the most, was when she saw the level of trust that they placed on 7753. They trusted her completely, even though 7753 had been keeping secrets and lying to a lot of people throughout the incident.

They were true Magical Girls.

Yet, they were the ones who died, and someone like 7753 was the one who survived, instead.

After recovering from the incident, 7753 found Tepsekemei's lamp that she left in the battlefield somewhere in town.

She received a message from her mentor as well,

7753. If you could, please take care of Tepsekemei.

She shouldn't be a bother if you have her lamp. She'll probably need food, some books, and a place to stay.

Animal Magical Girls are a rare breed. 7753 had scouted over 500 Magical Girls, and out of them, there were only 3 animals.

In most cases, they were quite blunt. They tend to act on instinct, and they express their emotions extremely and straightforwardly. Their allegiances are always clear as well, rarely backstabbing those who they are loyal to.

Tepsekemei though, is unique even among Animal Magical Girls. She rarely shows emotions, is even calmer than most human Magical Girls, and perhaps quiet too. It's natural of course, as she's a turtle.

After moving in with 7753, Tepsekemei often got out to the gardens, dug holes, and stared at the sky while flying.

She had no care in the world, and that worried 7753.

“Uh, Mei… Could you please try and be careful when you go out?”

“What do you mean?”

“Can you try not to make yourself visible?”

“But Mei likes being visible.”

“I know… but… the neighbors, they’re not Magical Girls, and seeing a flying genie probably isn’t a good idea.”

And so Tepsekemei always assimilated herself with the wind, and went out invisible whenever she got out of the house.

This isn’t the only time Tepsekemei does this, as she took the meaning of ‘*What’s mine is your*’ a bit… too literally.

“This is Mei’s house, so Mei can do what Mei wants.”

“No, Mei. This is *my* house. You’re my roommate.”

“We are sleeping together, so this is Mei’s house.”

“Sle- wait, how’d you even know that word?”

“Mei learned it on TV.”

Why did she have to use *sleeping together*…

Maybe she was a male turtle before transformation. The thought scared her. 7753 decided that *ignorance is bliss* and didn’t bother checking with her goggles.

Day in and day out, 7753 always had to care for Tepsekemei. Her antics often made her day busy, and actually… that’s pretty good for her, too.

Whenever things are quiet, 7753 would feel very depressed, still thinking about the event from before.

They had to work together with Pythie, who was the worst of the worst. It was required because they needed to defeat an even stronger enemy. Pukin.

Hana, who fought Pukin even until she died.

Mao Pam, who rescued Hana and risked her life.

Ripple, who went to help Mao Pam and never returned.

Wedin…

…Wedin, the girl who just wanted to be a Magical Girl.

Funny Trick, who crawled while she was dying, and still attacked Pukin, even as her injuries pained her.

Kuru-Kuru Hime, who willingly became a decoy so that Pukin would be defeated.

Magical Girls have stronger mental strength than their human forms. This is true for their hearts, or any other part of their body. 7753 remained as a Magical Girl inside her house.

This is because if she transformed into a human, she'd be mentally exhausted, unable to sleep from being one of the few survivors of the massacre.

If she became human again, she would shrink back into alcoholism to relieve the pain, and then her body would be destroyed. At times, she thought about it, but then she saw Tepsekemei, and she decided to keep going, despite how painful it can be.

Three weeks had passed since the B-City incident, and her mentor had contacted her again.

Good news. Mana's recovering well.

If you'd like, you could go visit her. I've got the hospital address sent to your goggles. I asked Mana's father, and he said it'd be fine for someone to go visit her.

She won't say it, but she longs for visitors. I'm still trying to deal with the chaos in the Land of Magic, but you should go see her.

A visit would be nice. 7753 wanted to see Mana again, but she also felt guilty for getting Mana into this situation, for lying to her.

"7753 is visiting Mana? Mei wants to visit too."

Mei's eagerness convinced 7753 to give Mana a visit.

7753 made Tepsekemei promise to stay in her lamp at all times. To keep her head still, and not attract attention.

Tepsekemei nodded, and after finding a way to hide her hair, 7753, still in Magical Girl form, went to the hospital. She placed the lamp inside her bag, and Tepsekemei went inside of it.

Occasionally, Tepsekemei's head began to seep through the lamp and out of her bag.

"I told you to keep your head down, Mei!"

"But Mei wants to see outside."

"People are going to be freaked out. Just hang in there, okay?"

Tepsekemei nodded and went back inside.

The air was cold. It's about to be winter, and the trees are already starting to dry up. Yet, everyone is having fun and walking around.

7753 found a nice flower shop. She brought a bouquet of pink cymbidium flowers, decorated with some ribbons. She also brought chocolate mousses, the most expensive ones too. Only the best for Mana.

"Mei smells something delicious."

"I told you not to pop your head out!"

"Sorry…"

7753 bought a cheesecake, and stuffed it into her bag. Tepsekemei eagerly chewed on that cheesecake and didn't make another sound again.

Magical Girls don't need to eat, but Tepsekemei was munching all of this food. Maybe it was her animal instincts kicking in.

Finally, they arrived at the hospital. It was pure white, and clean, with no stains at all on the…

…Nevermind, if you looked closely, you'd see bird poop everywhere.

Nevertheless, this hospital was one of the Land of Magic sanctioned hospitals. They have all the necessary equipment for removing magical poisoning from a Mage. Of course, the hospital accepts normal patients too. In fact, most of the patients here are human.

“Mei doesn’t like this smell.”

“Nobody likes hospital smell, Mei. Patience okay?”

7753 entered the lounge. It was a big room with only a few people there. A large mirror was on the wall. 7753 stopped in front of the mirror.

Tepsekemei popped out,

“Pee?”

“Wha- no! Why would I pee in the lounge?”

Tepsekemei shrugged and went back in the bag.

7753 looked at herself in the mirror. It reflected her completely. Her heart felt sad, but she can’t make that feeling go away.

She put on her goggles, and set it to detect the level of *sadness*, then *pain*, then *loneliness*. However, no data came out.

That’s because she’s only looking at a mirror. It only reflected an image of 7753, not 7753 herself. So, scanning herself was near-impossible.

That’s what’s bothering her. She knew everything about everyone else, but she’s so confused about what she’s feeling now.

7753 had waited for quite some time. Finally, visiting hours were available. She went straight towards Mana’s room.

At first, she was walking fine, but then her palms began to sweat. She became nervous.

What did Mana think of all this? What did Mana think of the incident? Was she going to get scolded by Mana? She was prepared to accept the worst.

7753 took off her goggles, placing them in her bag. She didn’t want to wear goggles when she was in Mana’s room. It’s probably rude.

She knocked on the door.

“Come in,” said a voice from inside.

The room was filled with colorful magical squares on the ceilings, walls, and floor. There was also an LCD TV, a fridge, a sofa, and a bed.

On the bed was a sickly-looking girl. Mana. 7753 could barely recognize her, since she was so out of shape.

“Oh, it’s you,” said Mana. Her voice was cracked, and she was sniffling. Her face and eyes were red.

“You okay?” asked 7753.

“I mean… I’m in a hospital, so who knows?” said Mana.

7753 stood beside the window. She was glad that she wasn’t being scolded by Mana, but at the same time she felt sorry for her.

“Find a seat if you want. Make yourself at home,” said Mana.

“Can Mei go out?” asked Mei from inside 7753’s bag.

“Huh? Oh, yeah, sure.”

Tepsekemei got out, 7753’s goggles on her head.

Mana’s face freaked out. “What’s she doing? Hey, put those goggles away!”

7753 panicked and quickly removed the goggles from Tepsekemei’s head.

“Are you going to beat up Mana?” asked Tepsekemei.

“What? No! Why?” asked 7753.

“You said we’re visiting to ‘take care’ of her.”

“We *are* visiting to take care of her!”

Tepsekemei tilted her head in confusion.

“Doesn’t take care mean beating up?”

“No! It means to care for a person, where’d you even get *that* from?”

“Television.”

“Mei… I think you’re watching the wrong kinds of dramas. Oh, I almost forgot. I’ve got presents, Mana!”

7753 took out the bouquet and food that she brought earlier.

“Mind if I put it in here?” asked 7753, as she placed the flowers in a vase near Mana.

Mana simply nodded.

She hadn’t noticed it before, but it seemed like the way this room was decorated, that this was a VIP room of some sort. Makes sense. Mana was pretty high up in the Examination Division.

7753 looked out the window.

“It’s almost Christmas soon. Can’t believe it’s been a month.”

Mana glanced from her bed. Her hair was in shambles. Gone are her trademark curly swirls on the side. She looked like she hadn’t seen sunlight in a long time.

“How are you, lately?” asked Mana weakly.

“I’m okay. I should be asking you that question though.”

“Well… Like I said. I’m in a hospital. Hey, by the way. When all this is over, mind if I talk to your boss?”

“Yeah. She says she’s busy cleaning up some stuff.”

“Alright. I’m going to try and piece together what I can, once I recover.”

Mana ate some of the mousse. With every bite, it seems like her face began to become redder and redder.

“Hey, 7753.”

“Yeah?”

“Remember when I said I wanted to talk to your boss?”

“You mean just a few seconds ago?”

“Yes. Can I talk to her directly?”

“Sure.”

“Like, in person.”

“Okay? I can help you with that.”

“Here, perhaps. While I’m still recovering, maybe. As soon as you can.”

“Um… well, she’s a bit busy, but… I guess if you wanted to talk to her, and it’s urgent.”

“Yes… Very urgent. I need to investigate from all points of views.”

“That’s true.”

“Hana always told me to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. She said… That people do things for a reason, and to them, their reason may be just. So… I just wanna know…”

“That’s fair.”

“Also… Um… I don’t know how to say this…”

“We won’t judge, Mana.”

“Okay…”

Mana took a deep breath. Her face red with embarrassment.

“…Nobody visits me.”

7753 looked slightly startled by that statement.

“What are you talking about? We’ll always visit you, Mana,” said 7753. Tepsekemei nodded as well.

“Yeah… you two… and my Father. But that man always brings research and whatnot and doesn’t actually bring me anything else. I haven’t changed from these hospital robes in weeks. At least bring me fresh clothes…”

Mana’s lips began to tremble.

“Mana, hey, if you need us to-”

“And really, couldn’t he spend some time to actually talk to me, too? And where’s the rest of the Examination Division? I’m not trying to brag, but the least they could do is check up on me, y’know? Nobody’s come here in the last three weeks. The only one that’s ever visited me before when I got sick was… was…”

Her eyes started tearing up.

“Mana… you okay?” asked 7753 nervously.

Mana then began sobbing and crying.

“…I’ve got no one else anymore… Nobody really loves an asshole like me… The only one that ever visited me was Hana, and she’s gone, now… Hana’s gone… Sis…”

7753 stood up from her chair and sat next to Mana.

“Hey, it’s okay… Hey, we’re here.”

“Sis… I want my sister back… I miss my sister…”

All the emotion she kept bottled in from the incident. Three weeks of mourning and denial poured out of her eyes as she cried.

Her crying became louder, and she began bawling like a baby. She immediately hugged 7753 tightly.

“Nobody loves me anymore… You’ll come, right… I don’t wanna be alone…”

7753 nervously hugged Mana, “Yeah, it’s okay. Um… Hey, we’re always gonna be here, alright?”

Mana’s crying became louder and louder.

Then the door opened, “What’s going on, here?”

There was a bear at the door.

Wait, no, that's just a nurse that's the size of a bear.

"Do I smell alcohol?" asked the nurse.

"Huh? Alcohol? No, we didn't have alcohol in here," said 7753.

The nurse looked at the chocolate mousse, and sniffed it. She glared at 7753. "This is alcohol. There's traces of alcohol in the food. It's probably harder to smell due to the disinfectant, but this is alcohol."

"I, uh… I didn't know, hehe…" said 7753 sheepishly.

Mana looked at 7753 with anger, "You *spiked my food*!? You *assholes*! I thought you said you loved me, Waaaah!"

"Mana, calm down, I uh… We didn't know, sorry!" said 7753 sheepishly.

The nurse shook her head, "Alcohol wouldn't affect Magical Girls, but Mana's under severe magical poisoning. Her immune system is weak, so the alcohol has a higher effect on her. Please, let us handle this."

"Sorry, Mana! Sorry!" said 7753.

"GET OUT!!! I DON'T WANNA SEE YOUR *STUPID* FACES AGAIN… except I DO!! SO DON'T… LEAVE FOREVER, JUST… NGGGH"

The nurse tightly hugged Mana, "Alright calm down, now. You two, leave."

7753 nodded and dragged Tepsekemei outside the room.

"Well… that was unexpected," said 7753. She honestly didn't know that there were alcoholic traces on the mousse.

Tepsekemei glanced at 7753.

"7753. Why did Mana have small red things."

"Huh?"

“When Mei put on goggles. She had small red things when we came in. She had lots of them before that.”

“Oh. The hearts. They detect things about people.”

“Mei is worried.”

7753 took out her goggles and checked the status.

It was detecting *Loneliness*. When 7753 and Tepsekemei came in, it must’ve shrank to nothing.

That made 7753 happy.

“Hey, Mei. Let’s go back inside. Mana might kick us out again, but I think she’d appreciate us being there.”

Tepsekemei nodded and went back inside her lamp.

Her head slowly popped out as well.

“Y’know, Mana’s a lot more open when she’s drunk,” said 7753.

“Yes. She is,” replied Mei.

“Let’s try and cheer her up, okay. Losing something you love isn’t easy.”

“Mei would be sad if Mei lost her lamp.”

“That lamp?”

“Yes. Grace gave it to Mei.”

“Grace?”

“Captain Grace. She’s like Wedin. She has friends. She gave Mei the lamp. Mei misses her.”

7753 didn’t really know Captain Grace, but it must’ve been one of the Namiyama High School kids.

7753 nodded and nervously gripped the door.

Today, she’s going to be there for Mana.

7753 confidently turned the doorknob.